

STATEMENT

OF

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BEFORE THE

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY, VETERANS AFFAIRS,
AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

REGARDING

COMBATING TERRORISM: PROTECTING THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 21, 2002

**2247 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
1:00 P.M.**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on “Combating Terrorism: Protecting the United States.” Since September 11, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) has responded, in conjunction with other agencies, to perform direct law enforcement activities, provide identification and intercept capabilities, increase border security, supply intelligence information and complete investigative and detention functions with the goal of strengthening national security.

We are conducting these efforts along with our other immigration mission responsibilities. The focus on national security and counter-terrorism has enhanced enforcement efforts and strengthened enforcement policies.

Today, I will describe how the INS is strengthening our border security, setting priorities, and working in coordination with the Office of Homeland Security. Some examples of the joint efforts we have pursued to enhance our Nation’s security follow:

- We are working with the FBI and other members of Joint Terrorism Task Forces on the investigation of the September 11 attacks, and to remove from the U.S. persons identified in the course of that investigation, where appropriate;
- We have been working with the State Department to expand data sharing to ensure that Immigration Inspectors have access to the issued visa information in the Consolidated Consular Database. As a result, this information is now available at all U.S. ports-of-entry (POEs), and we have trained our inspectors on how to use it to detect and prevent fraud, particularly imposters;
- Immediately after September 11, the INS, and other Department of Justice components and the State Department developed new criteria for scrutinizing visa applicants, which are now in place. Together, we also accelerated plans to reassess the eligibility of six countries to participate in the Visa Waiver Program and we have joined with the State Department to tighten regulations regarding various entry procedures that under ordinary circumstances facilitate travel, but which could be exploited to do the U.S. harm;
- We are working with the Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control to identify and freeze the assets of terrorist organizations and their various front groups, and to pursue removal proceedings, when possible, against principals and directors of those organizations and fronts;
- We worked with other agencies and the Office of Homeland Security to develop 7 interagency initiatives for refugee program security enhancements. These includes additional database, records and fingerprint checks, and pre-flight notification to the FBI,
- We have been working diligently with the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Customs Service, the Department of Energy, and the Department of Defense to improve container inspection and tracking. Together these agencies will coordinate development of chemical, biological, radiological and other nuclear detection devices to increase our inspection capability.

STRENGTHENING BORDER SECURITY

Ports- of-Entry

Since September 11th, the Inspections Program has focused its resources on meeting our Threat Level One operating instructions. Threat Level One commitments include: staffing all small

and remote land ports 24 hours a day/7 days a week¹; ensuring that all flights are fully inspected at their first POE; completing record checks of those seeking admission; completing enhanced checks of vehicles as they cross the land borders; and working with the U.S. Coast Guard and other agencies to safeguard our seaports. This increased commitment to thorough and accurate determinations will affect the more than five hundred million persons who are inspected at our POEs every year. The post-September 11th procedures put into place at POEs have strengthened the enforcement posture of the Nation and contribute directly to improved border security.

In order to support and sustain Threat Level One operations in terms of monitoring and security at our land POEs, we requested support from the Department of Defense (DoD). This request was supported through \$34 million provided in the recent emergency supplemental. INS will reimburse DoD for personnel and equipment support to Inspectors at the POEs and to Border Patrol Agents between the POEs. The DoD is supplying personnel to land border POEs to provide a heightened security presence, assisting in physical inspection of vehicles, and performing traffic management and pedestrian control duties. Between the POEs, the DoD is supplying technical and administrative support to sector intelligence centers, helicopters in six sectors, and assistance in deploying sensing and surveillance equipment. This partnership is helping the INS to maintain Threat Level One anti-terrorism operations to protect the integrity and security of our border.

The INS also has increased its use of Passenger Analytical Units (PAUs) at air and sea POEs. These units generate tactical information for inspectors engaged in determining whether a non-citizen seeking admission to the United States is admissible. Using the Advanced Passenger Information System (APIS) in conjunction with the Interagency Border Inspection System (IBIS), INS PAU inspectors are able to precisely analyze the passenger arrival and departure information. Combined with other passenger information systems or information obtained through on-line airline reservation systems, inspectors can make associations between suspected fraud and smuggling activity and, through link analysis, identify individual enforcement targets before the passengers arrive in the United States for inspection. This critical work assists the INS in identifying illegal aliens, criminals, and terrorists that attempt entry.

The Border Patrol

In 1994, the Border Patrol implemented a four-phased multi-year national strategy to deter, detect and apprehend illegal entrants, smugglers and contraband along our 8,000 miles of border. The strategy directed a phased forward deployment of personnel, equipment and technology along the Southwest Border and then along the Northern Border, Pacific, Atlantic, and Gulf Coasts.

Following the events of September 11, the Border Patrol undertook a number of enforcement initiatives to assist in supporting and augmenting U.S. national security. Within 36 hours of the attacks, the Border Patrol detailed 318 agents to 9 airports across the country. Additional agents were detailed to POEs on both the Northern and Southern borders to assist with providing security and to facilitate the entry of legitimate commerce. In January, 100 agents and additional air assets were detailed to the 8 Northern border sectors to augment existing capabilities and expand coverage within the sectors' areas of responsibilities. The Border Patrol, working in cooperation with the U.S. Coast Guard, conducted joint operations on the Great Lakes and surrounding waterways to deter illegal entry and apprehend violators. 245 new agents from the FY 2002 appropriations and the counter-terrorism supplemental will be deployed to the Northern Border, resulting in a 67% staffing increase over FY 2001 levels.

¹ All land ports-of-entry are staffed, with the exception of two POEs, one in Alaska and one in Montana, that are closed because they are seasonal ports. Appropriate steps have been taken to ensure that both locations are monitored.

The Border Patrol is also working with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Canada Customs and Revenue Agency and U.S. Customs to establish Integrated Border Enforcement Teams (IBETs) at several key locations along the Northern Border. IBET teams serve as a "force multiplier" by combining team personnel, resources and technology to enhance border integrity and security at our shared border with Canada. IBETs operate as intelligence-driven teams to address terrorism and identify and investigate persons and organizations that pose a threat to national security or are engaged in other criminal activity.

With the FY 2002 regular appropriations, and the counter-terrorism supplemental appropriations, we will continue to deploy agent staffing, technology and support resources to meet our long-term border management objectives to maintain and extend control along the Southwest Border and increase control along the Northern Border.

INVESTIGATIVE PRIORITIES IN THE INTERIOR OF THE UNITED STATES

The Investigations Program has responded to this crisis in a number of ways. Although the INS continues to investigate anti-smuggling activity and to identify and arrest criminal aliens, antifraud and other violations of immigration law, our highest priority is to support the criminal investigation of the terrorist attacks of September 11 and the war on terrorism. INS Investigations Program has 2,246 Special Agents authorized to accomplish these tasks.

INS Investigations Program is conducting several initiatives to enhance national security, such as the Alien Absconder Project and work-site enforcement investigations which focuses on airports and other sensitive installations. INS Headquarters directed each Region to initiate work-site investigations into the hiring practices of companies employing people who work at airports and have direct access to commercial aircraft and other secure areas.

In the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks on the United States, the INS Anti-Smuggling Program is focused on dismantling smuggling organizations with links to terrorism and others that pose a risk to the national security of the United States. Investigations of these organizations play a vital role in the INS' overall homeland security efforts.

The INS, along with other agencies, target alien smuggling organizations that pose a serious threat to the national security of the United States or are linked to terrorism. The INS participates in an interagency working group (comprised of the INS, the FBI, and other Department of Justice components, the Department of State, the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and the U.S. Coast Guard) which coordinates the government-wide response on various alien smuggling issues. The INS Anti-Smuggling Program accords top priority to investigations of the organizations targeted by the Interagency Working Group.

In addition, the INS Anti-Smuggling Program is currently conducting "Operation Southern Focus," an initiative in Central and South America and the Caribbean, involving the investigation and prosecution of organizations identified by the interagency working group as smugglers of special interest aliens. Generally, special interest aliens are from countries hostile to the United States or where global terrorist groups are known to have operated or recruited. Agents have been detailed from various domestic offices to overseas locations, where they are working under the direction of the INS Officers in Charge in conjunction with Department of State and the host country governments, to develop investigations and prosecutions against targets. Those targets are being prosecuted, either by the Transnational Unit of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Washington, DC, or in another appropriate venue.

FOREIGN TERRORIST TRACKING TASK FORCE

The INS has a leadership role on the Foreign Terrorist Tracking Task Force. The Task Force serves to facilitate communication and coordination among the INS, the FBI, the Treasury Department led by the U.S. Customs Service, the State Department, and other agencies that are tasked with counter-terrorism responsibilities. It is a multi-agency task force that leverages agency expertise to produce intelligence to keep terrorists and their supporters out of the United States and detect and remove those who may already have entered our country. The INS and other Task Force agencies coordinate their efforts to develop lead information on counter-terrorism-related subjects and to neutralize the threat of alien terrorists.

COORDINATION WITH THE OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY

The INS and other components of the Department of Justice are enhancing enforcement efforts and strengthening our government's counter-terrorism efforts, through coordination with the Office of Homeland Security, particularly in our relations with Canada and Mexico. In December 2001, Commissioner Ziglar headed an INS delegation to an Office of Homeland Security-led international conference in Ottawa, Canada, that included representatives from the Departments of Justice, Transportation, Defense, State, and Treasury. An important product from that conference was a Smart Border Declaration signed by Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge and Canadian Deputy Prime Minister John Manley. The Declaration includes 30 initiatives aimed at enhancing security along our shared border. The INS was a major contributor to this agreement. By working together, the United States and Canada will create a more secure border.

Earlier this month, Governor Ridge, Commissioner Ziglar, and other senior Administration officials traveled to Mexico City, Mexico, to develop broad-based proposals for strengthening our joint security and to build on recent cooperative efforts with the Mexican government.

CONCLUSION

The Administration and Congress are working together to enhance our Nation's security. We at the INS will use every means at our disposal to mobilize personnel and resources in the most effective way. We look forward to continuing to work closely with Congress and other federal agencies to combat terrorism and protect the American people.

Thank you for this opportunity to appear, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to your questions.